

As an early morning sun chases away the morning chill, ten binocular-clad people gather at PPL's Montour Preserve. They came to join the preserve's naturalist on a May walk to look for birds. It didn't take long to find some. Before the group started across the parking lot they had their first encounters: cardinals singing high in the treetops, a scolding Blue Jay flying overhead, and Red-winged Blackbirds proclaiming their territories. Attention quickly turned to a lone bird perched atop a dead snag, an American Kestrel, Pennsylvania's smallest falcon. A flash of yellow appeared and just as quickly vanished in a shrub row. Rapid notes of this warbler's *sweet* song helped to mark its progress from one bush to another. Then, as if on cue, the Yellow Warbler hopped into full view practically glowing in the morning sunlight. As the morning unfolded, the birders spotted one bird after another. The enthusiastic group quickly identified common species, while less common ones required a consultation with field guides. By the end of the two-hour walk the birders had cataloged a total of 40 different bird species identified by sight or sound.

Feathered Friends

AT MONTOUR PRESERVE

Article by Jon Beam

Photos taken by Moses Martin at PPL Montour Preserve
This page: Male Common Yellowthroat





Hooded Merganser



Bald Eagle

The preserve boasts a total of 230 different bird species observed there over 30 years. And the list continues to grow. Each season brings something special as the year unfolds. As the seasons change throughout the year,

so do the bird viewing possibilities at PPL's Montour Preserve. Spring brings returning songbirds and woodland warblers. Some remain to breed while others continue their journey north. Summer's lull in migration provides a challenge to search for breeding birds. Nesting Baltimore Orioles, Yellow Warblers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and Great Crested Flycatchers are only a few of the species that hide their nests in hedgerows and forests at the preserve.

Waterfowl and shorebirds begin arriving in late summer to the 165-acre Lake Chillisquaque in the center of the preserve. As some water birds continue south, others arrive at the lake. Each day through late fall can provide exciting finds for the astute observer. Two wildlife observation blinds along the lakeshore offer a unique vantage point for watching waterfowl.

Winter brings its own special rewards to birders. Winter raptors can include Northern Harriers, Rough-legged Hawks, Short-eared and Long-eared Owls. As soon as the ice starts to recede from the lake in late winter, waterfowl make their appearance. Snow Geese and Tundra Swans are always a visual treat. Loons, mergansers, grebes, and numerous species of ducks



Philadelphia Vireo

parade through on their way north. Osprey and Bald Eagles make their appearance for a time.

While birders enjoy these common and some not so common bird species, rare visitors at Montour Preserve are once-in-a-life-time treasures. Over the years American Avocet, American White Pelicans, Barnacle Goose, Northern Shrike and Snowy Owl have appeared and vanished. But this is all part of the birding experience.

Did you know . . .

- Bucknell University's Chillisquaque Creek Natural Area has 66-acres of wetlands, deciduous forests and meadows that attract Wood Ducks, Song Sparrows and Red-Tailed Hawks?
- In the past 30 years, PPL Montour Preserve & PPL Susquehanna Riverlands has seen over 230 species of birds, including the White Pelican and the Baltimore and Orchard Orioles?
- Briar Creek Lake has a park over 173-acres and has seen over 134 birds, including the Laughing and Bonaparte's Gulls?
- Ricketts Glen State Park encompasses over 13,050 acres and is one of the best parks in the state for observing boreal birds such as the Blue-Headed Vireo, Yellow-Rumped Warbler and Purple Finch?
- Council Cup Scenic Overlook has a 700-foot-high bluff that overlooks the Susquehanna River and is one of the best spots in PA to see migrating Hawks?
- You can purchase Audubon's "Susquehanna River Birding & Wildlife Trail" guide at our Bloomsburg Visitors Center?